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Development/Implementation of Retention Strategies for Probation Officers

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The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) supports the Governor by protecting the public and reclaiming juveniles through prevention, community programs, education, and rehabilitative services in the least restrictive environment. The Division of Community Services is responsible for a wide range of programs and services to juveniles and their families. Direct services are provided to juveniles and their families in the community through 43 county offices, servicing all 46 counties in the state. Case managers are involved with juveniles from the moment they enter the system until they complete probation and/or parole. In addition, they conduct detention screenings and intake interviews, complete risk/needs assessments, and make recommendations to the family court judges regarding case disposition. They also coordinate case diversion and supervise juveniles on probation or parole. Additional support services are available to the community through collaboration or partnership with the family court system, schools, and supervise juveniles on probation or parole.

The Office of Consultation and Evaluation Services is responsible for conducting psychological evaluations and consulting with case managers about individual cases. DJJ also operates an array of residential services for juveniles in the community including three secure evaluation centers. The evaluation centers provide court-ordered evaluations of adjudicated juveniles prior to final disposition of their cases.

Key Terms

The following are some key terms that need to be defined for the purposes of this project:

Juvenile- A person who, by reason of age, falls under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Justice System. In South Carolina, this is anyone under 17 years of age or less serious offenses and under 16 for serious offenses.

Family Court- Where juveniles, under the age of 17, come when they get into trouble by committing crimes or status offenses (such as running away from home, being incorrigible at home, and being truant from school). Family Court hears cases of child abuse and neglect.

Adjudication- In Family Court, a juvenile is not found guilty or innocent as in adult court; rather, if the judge finds the allegations in the petition are true, then the juveniles are either adjudicated delinquent or non-delinquent. If the judge finds that the allegations in the petitions are not true, then no adjudication takes place.

Disposition- The action taken by the Family Court judge concerning a juvenile case. If adjudicated delinquent, the judge may sentence a juvenile to a correctional institution or place him/her on probation.

Hearing-When a juvenile and his/her family and lawyer come before the judge in Family Court to determine whether he/she is delinquent as alleged in the petition

Status Offender- A juvenile who has committed an act, illegally prohibited to juveniles, which would not be a crime if committed by an adult, i.e. truancy, runaway, incorrigible

Solicitor- The chief law officer of city, town, or government department assigned to prosecute juvenile offenders

Delinquent- A juvenile who has committed an act that violates state/federal law and/or local ordinances

Arbitration- A process in which non-violent, first time offenders are given a hearing by an arbitrator in lieu of court

Commitment- Official confinement, as to a prison or mental hospital

Court-ordered Evaluation-An evaluation ordered by a Family Court Judge for an assessment following adjudication and proceeding final disposition of a juvenile case

Placement-an out-of-home community –Based setting to which a juvenile is sent for shelter and/or treatment

Intake-The gathering of information pertaining to a juvenile and his/her alleged criminal offense

Incorrigible-Incapable being controlled and reformed

Determinate Sentence-A sentence which is determined by a Family Court Judge and is for a specific amount of time, i.e. 90 days, etc.

In order for the agency to accomplish its mission, the agency needs to be able to retain probation officers. The Probation Officers are a clear link to the agency's mission by providing services to juveniles that remain in the community. If there is a shortage of staff, there will be more juveniles that have to be supervised per officer. If juveniles are unsupervised, the crime rate will increase and truancy will rise. The Community Services Division goals are: (1) protect the public, (2) repair harm, (3) develop youth and family skills, (4) create community partnerships, and (5) reclaiming youth through prevention.

The goal of this project is to develop retention strategies for officers to accomplish the mission of the agency. There are three reasons why this is a problem. First, juveniles and families are not being served, or are being inappropriately served, due to shortage of staff. Secondly, there is a high level of stress on remaining employees that are burdened with the distribution of departed employee's workload. This has an impact on the morale in the office. Finally, the high cost for turnover is detrimental with focuses on the taxpayer's and agency's dollars. The Probation Officers length of stay is from one to two years. It costs the agency about \$253, 728 to replace 18 Probation Officers.

*1 citation
(Indicates the source
of this info?)
(\$14,096 per
officer)*

Data Collection and Analysis

A survey with 20 questions with reasons why employees stay with the S.C. Department of Juvenile Justice was given to employees. There were 22 Probation counselors that completed the survey. The survey was given to 14 Probation Officers from Richland County and 8 from Lexington County. This survey was appropriate because it was difficult to obtain data related to retention from the Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Department mails exit interview questionnaires with a self-addressed envelope. After interviewing the Employee Relations Officers, he indicated that they don't receive many of the questionnaires back. Therefore, the data collected would likely not be valid or reliable.

The survey was broken into five categories that tend to influence retention. The categories were: (1) Training/Development, (2) Relationship with Management, (3) Organization, (4) Performance Appraisal and (5) Satisfaction with day-to-day work. (See Survey Instrument) The results clearly showed that there are more people satisfied with the day-to-day operations. People strongly believed that training and development were reasons why employees stayed with this agency. The relationship with management was rated average. Most of the managers in the agency are baby boomers and have difficulty relating to the Generation X or Y employees. After reviewing the data, there was a relationship with the number of years people had been with agency and being satisfied with the day-to-day operation. The responses indicated a generational difference as well. The baby boomers were more content than the generation Xers and Yers with regards to their work. There were three statements from the Stay Survey that indicated a generational difference in responses. They are: (1) You are satisfied with the amount of

control you have over your job. (2) You are proud to say you work for this organization.

(3) You are satisfied with the pay for your job, compared with other jobs in the

community, which require the same skills.

The management team of the agency or local county office needs to develop a system of strategies to retain Probation Officers. Managers are vital in retaining Probation Officers in their respective county offices. Recruiting the right people is a major component of retaining Probation Officers. Hiring individuals who are truly a good fit, and who will likely succeed in the position, is important. Hiring someone who is a good fit increases the chances of a probation officer being satisfied with his or her work and the likelihood that they will remain with the agency for an extended period of time. It is important to have the right talent on the team. The Department of Juvenile Justice needs to know when hiring new people; they should meet the needs of the future. It should not just match the job demands. We need to be clear about the direction for the future, and then hire the talent to help achieve mission of the agency. When hiring the officers, observe their behavior by asking questions. This kind of job analysis drives your selection standards-do a good job at this first step and the rest of the hiring process will be faster, easier and yield a better match. The right person will make contributions to the agency's productivity and profitability that far exceed salary cost. The wrong person can cost plenty.

The quality of supervision services a Probationer receives is critical to retention in the Community Division. People leave managers and supervisors more often than they leave companies or jobs. It is not enough that the supervisor is well-liked or a nice person. Starting with clear expectations of the employee, the supervisor has a critical role

to play in retention. It is important that team members want supervisors who set clear performance expectations, deliver timely feedback on performance, live up to their word and promises, and provide an environment where the probation counselors can grow and succeed. Failure by supervisors and management to provide this can cause an employee to start looking for greener pastures. All employees want supervisors to be respectful, courteous, and friendly-that is a given. Supervisors play the largest role in a team member's development and ultimate success within an organization.

Communication couldn't be more important in the effort to retain employees. Supervisors need to ensure that team members know their roles, job description, and responsibilities within the organization. They also need to communicate any new agency policies or initiatives to all employees to be sure that everyone is on the same page. It is important to include team members in the decision making process, especially when decisions will effect an individual's department or work team. This can help to create a culture of employee involvement and will generate new ideas and perspectives that top management might never have thought of the new ideas. Supervisors should allow team members to share their knowledge with others. The highest percentage of information retention occurs when one shares that information with others. Facilitating knowledge sharing through an employee mentoring program can be equally beneficial for the team member being mentored as well as the mentor.

Supervisors must recognize team members for their hard work and let them know they are appreciated. Everybody, in all levels of an agency, wants to know that their efforts are appreciated and recognized. There are a number of options to acknowledge

employees' such as email or newsletter recognition. This will increase office morale as well. If an employee feels good about their work, their performance will increase.

Implementation Plan

1. The Agency should develop a cross training program with each division within the agency to give Probation Officers greater familiarity with each other's physical sites, responsibilities and roles of other positions, atmosphere, and cultures. It is important to meet the needs of our clients if we all understand the roles and responsibilities of each division, we will better meet the needs of our clients.
2. The Department of Juvenile Justice should implement an on-the-job training program in the county office. The program would consist of learning policy, peer shadowing, and feedback from supervisors or mentors. A form should be designed to reflect all information completed or not completed and placed in the employee's file. Each training category should be initialed by the employee and signed off by the supervisor. There should be a timeframe for all OJT to be completed. It should reflect the same time period of the planning stage of the EPMS.
3. A supervisor should develop a personal growth plan for employees that will develop new skills and provide opportunities for them to utilize in their positions. It is critical that the supervisor know the strengths and weaknesses of the Probation Officers in order to create opportunities for development and growth. Supervisors should allow the Probation Officers to be involved with this process in order to increase a sense of importance or belonging. When the Probation Officers are involved with decisions that can affect their

jobs and overall direction, the performance results are better. Employees want to feel valued and want to enjoy what they do.

4. The Department of Juvenile Justice should develop opportunities for career and personal growth through training and education, challenging assignments, and responsibility. Tuition reimbursement for Probation Officers is another retention tactic. The millennial employees want a career ladder or to know there is hope of career advancement.

5. The agency should allow flexible schedules for the Probation Officers. This would allow Probation Officers to make a decision about his or her working hours. It would be understood they are required to maintain the same quality of work. The agency has to recognize to balance work and personal life. Family is important to team members. When work begins to put a significant strain on one's family, no amount of money will keep an employee around. Small gestures such as allowing a team member to take an extended lunch once a week to watch his son's baseball game will be repaid with loyalty and extended employment with an agency.

Evaluation Method

In order to evaluate the plan that was implemented, there a number of techniques can be utilized. An assessment will be developed to address behavioral style, personal values and motivators, and personal skills. This assessment will outline the employee's strengths, weaknesses, and professional development opportunities.

A stay survey should be given quarterly to new hires and annually for seasoned employees. The results should be evaluated and compared on a quarterly basis. At the end of year, compare the results of the new hires and the seasoned employees to see how they view the agency. I think that this will give managers and supervisors an idea of what needs to be changed or enhanced.

Summary and Recommendations

After the survey was completed, there were a number of indications noted why employees stay with the Department of Juvenile Justice. It was evident that most employees stay with the agency because of training and the day-to-day operation. Generally, the employees have great respect and regards for management. Although there were similarities with the responses, it was almost obvious which age group completed the survey. The baby boomers valued relationships and day-to-day operation more than the generation Xers and Yers. This generation was more concerned with the compensation plan and a career track.

I think that if the Department of Juvenile Justice implements the strategies listed in this proposal, it would retain most of its employees. When retaining employees, it is important to understand that it starts with management. Managers need to invest in their

employees. It is the responsibility of management to be creative in keeping employees motivated. Managers have to ensure that the Probation Officers are trained properly. Employees need to feel valued in order to get the most of them.

If the Department of Juvenile Justice implements the retention strategies, they will be able to serve the families appropriately. It will reduce the stress level from the remaining employees. It will also increase the morale in the office. It will significantly reduce the cost of turnover. It costs \$14,096 per Probation Officer that leaves the agency. A Probation Officer's length of stay varies from one year to years in certain counties if not more in another region. The rate of turnover is generally high in the Pee Dee Region. I think that the turnover rate does not relate to the survey because of the location.

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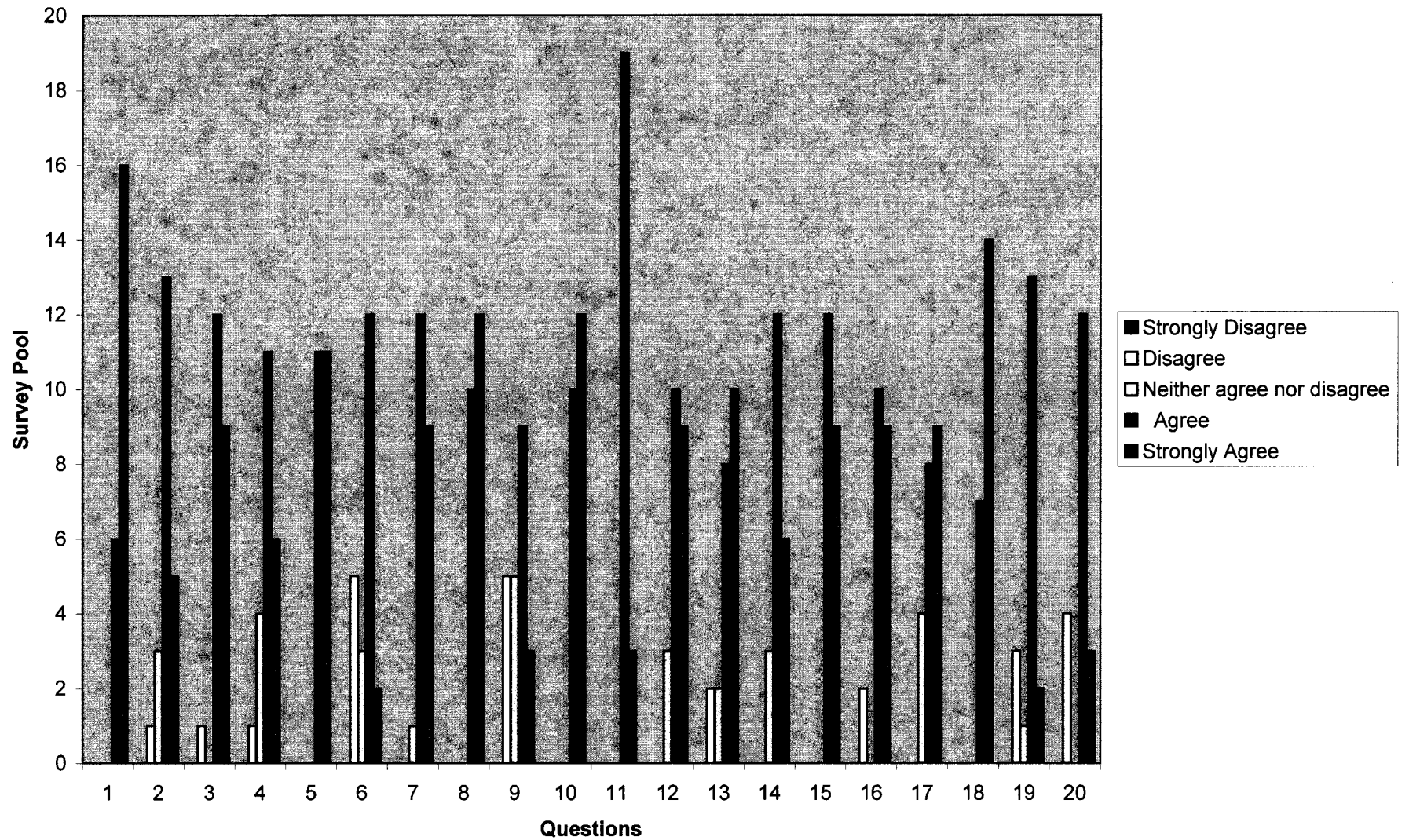
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Stay Survey



STAY SURVEY

Reasons Employees Stay in an Organization

February, 2008

	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
1 Employees are proud to belong to this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2 This organization does a good job in retaining essential employees.	1	2	3	4	5
3 You would recommend that a friend seek employment with this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
4 This organization is committed to the growth and development of its employees.	1	2	3	4	5
5 You are proud to say you work for this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
6 You would not quit your job here and go to work for another organization if the only difference was a moderate increase in pay.	1	2	3	4	5
7 There is a clear connection between your job performance and your compensation.	1	2	3	4	5
8 You understand the organization's pay/compensation plan.	1	2	3	4	5
9 New employees are provided the training necessary to perform their job.	1	2	3	4	5
10 The orientation program for new employees is adequate.	1	2	3	4	5
11 You are encouraged to attend programs/courses that increase your skills.	1	2	3	4	5
12 You have sufficient opportunity to attend educational programs.	1	2	3	4	5
13 Employees trust upper management.	1	2	3	4	5
14 Your supervisor has confidence and trust in you.	1	2	3	4	5
15 You are satisfied with the amount of control you have over your job.	1	2	3	4	5
16 You are satisfied with the pay for your job, compared with other jobs in the community, which require the same skills.	1	2	3	4	5

STAY SURVEY

Reasons Employees Stay in an Organization

February, 2008

	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
17 You are satisfied with your job.	1	2	3	4	5
18 The performance-appraisal process does a good job of measuring job performance.	1	2	3	4	5
19 Your supervisor gives feedback that is focused on behavior, rather than on the individual.	1	2	3	4	5
20 Your supervisor gives you timely feedback about how you are doing your job.	1	2	3	4	5

